1	IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT		
2	FOR THE DISTRICT OF OREGON		
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4	LILY HILBURN, et al.,)		
5	Plaintiffs,)	3:16-cv-02116-SI	
6	vs.	February 1, 2018	
7	SONNY PERDUE, et al,	Portland, Oregon	
8	Defendants.)		
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11	(Motion Hearing)		
12	TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS		
13	BEFORE THE HONORABLE MICHAEL H. SIMON		
14	UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT JUDGE		
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1 (February 1, 2018) 2 PROCEEDINGS 3 (Open court:) 4 THE CLERK: Your Honor, this is the time set 5 for oral argument in civil case 16-2116-SI, McFalls, 6 et al. versus Perdue, et al. 7 Counsel, in court, beginning with plaintiff, 8 please, identify yourselves for the record. 9 MS. CASSELLA: Good morning, Your Honor. 10 Jessica Cassella with the National Housing Project on behalf of the plaintiffs. 11 12 THE COURT: Good morning. 13 MR. ANDERS: Gideon Andrews, also on behalf of 14 the plaintiffs, National Housing. 15 MR. COX: James Cox from the 16 U.S. Attorney's Office appearing on behalf of all 17 defendants. MR. MARTIN: Good morning, Your Honor. 18 Assistant U.S. attorney Sean Martin for the defendants. 19 20 We are joined at counsel table by Mr. Wes Cochran, who is 21 the multi-housing family director for the RD Oregon 22 office, and Ms. Zoey Kohm, who is with USDA Office of 23 General Counsel. 24 THE COURT: Welcome. 25 All right. We are here on the defendants'

motion to dismiss the second amended complaint. I have read your materials, and I look forward to hearing additional argument: It is defendants' motion.

MR. COX: Thank you, Your Honor. Your Honor, one thing that is clear from reading plaintiffs' second amended complaint is that plaintiffs and their counsel have real disagreements with how the agency, the Rural Development Office, is running the programs at issue, the Rental Assistance Program and the Voucher Program. But that is not enough to confer standing onto plaintiff for their claims.

The plaintiffs have not shown for any of the claims of relief a particularized imminent injury that would grant them standing for any of the claims. Now, Your Honor, the specific arguments that defendants raise for the claims differ slightly as to the reason that plaintiffs do not have standing. The method that the Government would like to separate the argument, Your Honor, is I'll be addressing the flaws in the first and second claims for relief in the second amended complaint, those claims that deal with the civil rights impact analysis; Mr. Martin will be addressing the flaws in plaintiffs' third and fourth claims for relief that deal largely with the RD Voucher Program.

THE COURT: That's fine, of course. The

threshold question is this: Did the plaintiffs have standing when they commenced this lawsuit?

MR. COX: Yes, Your Honor, for one of their claims of relief.

assessed as of the commencement of the action, and if you have standing at the commencement of the action, aren't we done with standing? Now, if the action progresses and something happens such that there is no longer a particularized injury, because of some development that happens during the pendency of litigation, then doesn't the analysis become, one, not of standing, but of mootness?

And if that's the case, and I think it is, then we don't look at standing cases and standing doctrine, but instead at mootness cases and mootness doctrine, and most importantly for purposes of this motion, the exceptions to mootness.

Am I wrong?

MR. COX: Your Honor, I would agree with that. The one clarification that I would say is that standing depends on each form of relief that the plaintiffs have requested in their claims for relief. Your Honor, mootness is the doctrine that the Government relies on.

THE COURT: Then why did you begin your

argument then by telling me you are going to talk about standing?

MR. COX: Well, Your Honor, mootness is standing at one point in time --

THE COURT: Wait a minute. Laidlaw -- first of all, you are basically right, in the olden days. But when you say that mootness is standing at one point in time, I know you are referring to, or I think you are referring to the old 1980 case from the Supreme Court U.S. v. Parole Commission v. Geraghty. That language was then followed by the Supreme Court in Arizonans For Official Language from the Supreme Court a little bit later.

But Laidlaw says, well, that's a little bit confused, and Laidlaw describes it a little bit differently. But all of that ultimately goes back to the old Law Review Article by Professor Monahan on constitutional adjudication, where he said, "The requisite personal interest that must exist at the commencement of litigation -- standing -- must continue through its existence -- mootness."

So it is not really relevant through its various exceptions. So if we are talking about does a plaintiff have particularized injury, causal connection, and redressability, the standing requirements, that is

assessed at the time of the commencement of the litigation -- period, full stop.

If then something happens to perhaps undermine the existence of particularized injury, causation, causal connection, or redressability, all right, that's fine, we will then evaluate it under mootness. But mootness has a number of different exceptions that don't apply to the standing area, including, I think most relevant for this case, voluntary cessation, and we can evaluate when voluntary cessation does and doesn't apply, but that's analyzed under the doctrine of mootness.

Now, if you want to tell me I'm wrong, you can do that, but then you're going to have to give me some authority, because I'm relying on the Supreme Court in Laidlaw and a number of other cases.

MR. COX: Your Honor, I do agree with you. I think if I would were to apply it specifically to this case and talk about what gave plaintiffs standing, I think Your Honor is familiar with that. But it might help in looking at the claims, the agency had reached a decision prior to the filing of the complaint here. That decision was to accept the prepayment application by the borrower on this property. That final agency action, that decision to accept prepayment, created an imminent injury for the plaintiffs of losing the benefit of rental

assistance and becoming homeless.

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THE COURT: And it gave them basically particularized injury with causal connection that was redressable by the Court. That's why they had standing. Then the decision changed with the second analysis. Now you argue that -- at least what I think you are arguing is -- now it is moot, because we've made a different decision. And I'll say okay, and then we will see whether or not any of the mootness exceptions apply. What I'm most interested in hearing about is voluntary cessation, but it is a mootness debate we should be having.

MR. COX: Your Honor, the Government agrees that this is about mootness. That injury that existed at the time of the filing of the complaint, that imminent injury based on the agency's decision to accept the prepayment application no longer exists. The agency reached the opposite decision, which that basis for standing is now moot.

THE COURT: Because of the agency's action, it essentially voluntarily ceased the harmful effect that was threatening the plaintiff, and that gave them standing at the beginning. And now the question is: Do you satisfy the requirements to show that the case is moot, or does it still continue notwithstanding that

potential mootness under the voluntary cessation 1 exception? 2 3 MR. COX: Your Honor, the exception does not 4 apply. The decision by the agency is a settled step. 5 The reason for that, Your Honor, is that the borrower in 6 this case, Ms. Shiveley, chose not to elect the option to 7 challenge the agency's findings on that prepayment 8 application. If she had taken advantage of those appeal options, that exception, voluntary cessation, could 9 10 certainly apply, because then the agency at the appeals stage could reverse itself. 11 12 THE COURT: I understand. Although let me ask 13 you this: When does the 180-day period expire? 14 MR. COX: April 15th of this year. It began on October 17th. That's the current --15 16 THE COURT: Go ahead. October 17th, 2017. Ιt 17 expires April 15th, 2018. What happens if on 18 October 16th we look at the file and realize that no offers have been made? What happens then? 19 MR. COX: On April 16th? 20 21 THE COURT: Yes. 22 MR. COX: At that point in time the agency, if 23

23 it determines that no bona fide offers were made, then
24 the agency will give notice to the tenants that the
25 agency is going to be accepting a prepayment application

from the borrower because no offers were made during that time period.

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THE COURT: And at that time might the tenants or CARE have standing?

MR. COX: No, Your Honor. The reason is that the claims the plaintiff have made in their second amended complaint against the agency's practices are a settled step. There are no claims in the second amended complaint that the agency has run the "for sale" process improperly. The claims are about the agency's conduct with respect to the civil rights impact analysis, and the decision at that stage of the process was in favor of the tenants. If the agency does wind up accepting a prepayment application, it's not because the civil rights impact analysis resulted in a finding that the agency had to accept the application. It is for a completely different reason. It is that no one offered to buy the property.

THE COURT: If no one offers to buy the property, isn't there still the opportunity for the plaintiffs to benefit from the voucher program?

 $$\operatorname{MR}.$ COX: There is that opportunity, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Don't they contend that the regulations implementing that and interpreting and

applying that voucher program are invalid under the APA?

MR. COX: They do contend that, Your Honor, but their specific claims about that program would not even be ripe at that point in time once prepayment is accepted. Their claims, and Mr. Martin can talk in more detail about the unripeness of those claims, but those claims would not even come into ripeness even if the agency accepts a prepayment application. It is a very different injury than the injury that existed before.

THE COURT: I will want to hear more about that, but let me ask you this: Maybe the problem I'm about to identify is all my fault. If it is, I take responsibility. Should I wait until after April 15th to decide this case so we have a better understanding of where things are?

MR. COX: No, Your Honor. It would be improper to do that, Your Honor, because there are no claims in the complaint that would be ripe, even at that point in time, and there is no indication or pleading that the agency has done anything incorrect with respect to what is occurring now, the for sale process, and what occurred before then was actually a decision that was in the plaintiffs' favor.

THE COURT: Okay.

MR. COX: Your Honor, I think at this point in

time --

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THE COURT: You can tag team your partner whenever you want.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Your Honor. You mentioned vouchers, so I thought I would address that.

As Mr. Cox indicated, I am going to deal with claims 3 and 4. Claim 3 is what we believe is the main voucher claim in the second amended complaint. Our earlier briefing, Judge, identified in my view really a concern over a lack of a final agency action and a ripeness problem.

I don't want to belabor that briefing, but, you know, our view is that very much vacated the prepayment decision. It is not the culmination of the agency process at this point, and it doesn't have any legal ramifications because, instead, there is a different process, and the agency set the reset button.

So that's really not an appropriate basis for that third claim, as the briefing explained, nor is the annual voucher program, because that's basically a program, a policy announcement, which hasn't changed since 2008. So we believe, even if that were an inappropriate final agency action to fuel claim 3, there is a statute of limitations problem.

THE COURT: Although aren't statute of

limitations applied differently to an older regulation if we're talking about an "as applied" challenge versus a facial challenge?

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MR. MARTIN: Except when it is simply a renewal. I think the case law briefing showed you that when something is simply basically a word-for-word renewal, that that doesn't stop the statute of limitations, nor has this been applied, Judge.

There is even a further concern with the third claim, Judge, in that it is really not cognizable that RD is somehow arbitrary and capricious under the APA. And as plaintiffs allege in claim 3, allowing residents in prepaid buildings to get vouchers, even when there is going to be a restricted use covenant, that can't be a claim because Congress set up the program very plainly, and what RD is doing is simply following what Congress told it to do.

THE COURT: You are getting into the merits, aren't you?

MR. MARTIN: I don't think so, Judge. Our view is it's not a viable claim, because look at the authorization language for the voucher assistance, for the multifamily housing.

THE COURT: I thought your argument was it is not a viable claim because either there is no standing --

and I'm rejecting that standing at the commencement -your argument is either the claim has become moot or that
it is, on its face, violative of the statute of
limitations.

Did I miss something?

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MR. MARTIN: Well, looking at the actual statute, our view is this -- RD is tracking exactly what Congress told it to do. Congress told it to make vouchers eligible to all residents who are residing in an apartment complex when it's prepaid. So that's exactly what RD has authority to do, and that's how it is administered in the voucher program. So Congress, in the public law that's referenced by the plaintiffs, in their second amended complaint --

THE COURT: Although I don't see that in your motion to dismiss. I see your motion to dismiss as consisting of the following three arguments: On page 12, you argue the first and fourth claims must be dismissed because they are time barred, and plaintiffs lack standing. Your second argument, on page 16, the second and third claims for relief must be dismissed because there is no final agency action, and plaintiffs lack standing. Then your final -- I thought that was the third one. Those are the arguments, not that that they fail to state a claim because there is no arbitrary and

capricious violation. That's the merits, if we get there, and we are not getting there, I don't think.

Am I wrong?

MR. MARTIN: Judge, it is correct that our briefing doesn't have this laid out as a specified argument, but I did want to bring it to Your Honor's awareness and offer plaintiffs an opportunity to respond because we believe it is not viable to state a claim, because RD is literally doing what Congress instructed it to do.

THE COURT: I don't mean to be -- well, I do mean to be linear about this. Your motion right now is on statute of limitations, standing/ripeness, final agency action. That's what we're going to resolve. If you want to try to persuade the plaintiffs that they can't win on the merits for the reasons you're identifying now, you go right ahead, but I'll stay out of that discussion. I will address that if and when we get past the justiciability issues and after I've read both sides' briefs on the merits.

MR. MARTIN: Why don't I move on to the justiciability argument on claim 3. Our concern is simply whether there is a future voucher-based claim, whether there is a case or controversy essentially, depends on a lot of contingencies that may or may not

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happen in the future. Not only would there have to be no bona fide offers received during this 180-day period, right, which would allow prepayment to happen, but then there would have to be a situation where one of these plaintiffs wanted a voucher, right, applied for a voucher, and either the funding ran out, or there was some sort of problem with the application. But we believe it is speculative and conjecture at this point. There would need to be several steps in the future.

THE COURT: So if we assume that no offers are made by April 15th, you're telling me that it's still not a final agency action because the agency would have to do something. What would they have to do?

MR. MARTIN: No, I'm not saying that the acceptance of the prepayment -- I would acknowledge that as --

THE COURT: So is it that we don't know yet until April 15th whether there is or is not final agency action?

MR. MARTIN: Right, there isn't final agency action now. Then even if there is a acceptance of a prepayment, whether there is an actual voucher issue or dispute is really going to depend on a number of factors: That there are going to be residents who have leases that are going to expire in such a way that they won't have

the benefit of continuing the lease to the end of its term.

THE COURT: I'm not following you on this point. If we assume that there is no additional offers by April 15th, on April 16th will there have been final agency action that's reviewable?

MR. MARTIN: Well, actually, Judge, I would have to clarify that and say no, because there is at least an additional step of notifying residents about the acceptance.

THE COURT: Is that ministerial, or is that really what is considered final agency action? Or is that just ministerial? It's ministerial, isn't it?

MR. MARTIN: You may be right, Judge. I think it is a required notice provision. I think RD takes it seriously.

THE COURT: Absolutely. But just because something is ministerial and someone takes a ministerial obligation seriously doesn't mean that it has any relevance to a decision on final agency action.

MR. MARTIN: Right. But my point is, Judge, there being a final agency action, whether on April 16th, like you say, or on some future date, I think it is immaterial, because there is still contingencies after that; that there would have to be particular residents

who'd want the vouchers as opposed to other forms of relief or other forms of subsidy. Not only that, but apply for it in a timely way or in such a way that there is an injury that the program is out of money.

THE COURT: So we might not know until later whether or not people are being hurt and/or how they may be hurt. That's an interesting point, it is a fair point, but I don't think it affects the final agency action prong of the analysis.

MR. MARTIN: No, it doesn't affect whether the possibility of accepting a future prepayment is a final agency action, Judge, but it affects claim 3 because that's alleging there is a claim about operation of the voucher program that is going to depend on things and conduct and facts and specifics after that final agency action.

So it is really -- in a way, the administrative record isn't going to answer that question, right, because it is going to be after that fact -- the circumstances of developing a voucher -- if that makes sense.

THE COURT: Okay.

MR. MARTIN: Judge, why don't I move on to claim 4.

THE COURT: All right.

MR. MARTIN: Now, that's really a claim that plaintiffs have clarified, as we noted in our reply, that is brought on the part of the CARE plaintiff as opposed to the residents, because as the Court is aware, if there is a Golden Eagle II prepayment, there won't be the obligation to have a restrictive use covenant under 7 C.F.R. 3560.659(k). So really that leaves CARE as the only plaintiff on claim 4. As we briefed, Judge, we believe that the DBSI case establishes that there is a standing problem for that claim 4 for the CARE organization.

THE COURT: But we are not going to talk standing though; we are going to talk mootness, because there is standing as of the commencement of the action.

Now, if you want to tell me that claim 4 has become moot, fine, I'll listen to you.

MR. MARTIN: Well, I think it is more ripeness, Judge.

THE COURT: Okay, fine. If you want to tell me it is not ripe, I may even listen to that. But I think that it is more of a mootness issue, but that's fine. But the only thing we won't be talking about is standing, because that's determined at the commencement of the litigation. I don't mean to be rude. I'm a little flip here. But I really do think that standing is determined

at the beginning of the litigation. You're welcome to try to show me where you think I'm wrong.

MR. MARTIN: I think another problem, Judge, is final agency action, claim 4, doesn't even yet exist. I take your point that theoretically there is standing, but the fact is that claim 4 depends on final agency action that doesn't yet exist. We don't believe -- when there is prepayment, Judge, assuming that there is, for Golden Eagle II, that's not going to change claim 4 because claim 4 is about CARE's concern about other RD properties, and the fact those might get prepaid at some point and that once those other properties might get prepaid at some point in the future suggests that they might get be under restrictive use covenants that might be, in the plaintiffs' view, illegally lifted later after prepayment and imposition of the covenants in the first place.

So it is almost like thrice removed on ripeness in our view. We would also point this out, Judge:

That's not to say that some day there is a problem with this .662(f) regulation being invoked by RD illegally in the plaintiffs' view -- CARE plaintiffs -- that's going to be a determination by the terms of the rule that would, in our view, be a final agency action that could be brought if and when that ever occurs, but it is not

going to be the prepayment on Golden Eagle II, Judge. 1 2 Just a final point on the regulation. I think 3 it is important for the Court to know that the language 4 that was challenged in violation of ELIHPA, the 5 regulation actually mirrors, and it is actually slightly 6 more restrictive in defendants' favor than the ELIHPA 7 statute itself on this very important. 8 THE COURT: We are getting back to the merits, 9 right? 10 MR. MARTIN: I would say it is really just baseline. 11 12 THE COURT: Okay. 13 MR. MARTIN: For Your Honor's information, 14 that's 42 U.S.C. 1472(c)(1)(A)(ii). So in our view, when a regulation tracks ELIHPA, pretty much word for word 15 16 more to the tenants' favor, it may not state it in an 17 appropriate claim, aside from the record, Judge. 18 THE COURT: It is an interesting point. Did you make that specific point in your opening motion? 19 20 MR. MARTIN: We did not. Thank you, Judge. 21 THE COURT: Thank you. 22 Plaintiffs. Ms. Cassella or Mr. Anders or both 23 of you. Good morning. 24 25 MS. CASSELLA: Good morning.

The contours of this case have certainly changed since the case began, but the housing stability and the preservation of affordable housing for low-income tenants in Tillamook County is still at risk. Tenants still face displacement and cannot afford to move. And despite the fact that the defendant has changed the conclusion of the Civil Rights Impact Analysis, or the CRIA, none of the relief that the plaintiffs have sought in their second amended complaint has been granted. Therefore, the individual plaintiffs are still continuing to seek relief under the third claim, and CARE continues to seek relief claim under all four claims.

THE COURT: Tell me a little bit about claim 4, please, including the argument that defendants make that there is no final agency action yet with respect to claim 4.

MS. CASSELLA: Sure. Under the fourth claim, CARE's mission continues to be frustrated by RD's regulation, which violated ELIHPA by authorizing the termination of the use restriction.

THE COURT: A little more slowly.

MS. CASSELLA: Sorry. By authorizing the termination of the use assertion when voucher funding is not available.

This was imminently likely to occur at the

commencement of the litigation and when standing was established, as Your Honor has noted. Under the voluntary cessation doctrine, the change CRIA conclusion does not moot this claim. These illegal regulations are still being enforced. RD has not made any changes to its regulations, and the presence of two prepayment eligible properties within CARE's service area demonstrates the reasonable expectation that the wrong will be repeated and will again impact CARE.

THE COURT: Along those lines, and we're talking primarily about mootness and the voluntary cessation exception, I think the answer to my question may be obvious, but I want to make sure I'm not misunderstanding something. You can confirm for me, as CARE's counsel, will CARE continue to file lawsuits or claims in the future if additional properties do receive prepayment approval under these regulations?

MS. CASSELLA: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Okay. I thought it was obvious, but I thought it was safe to put it on the record.

You may proceed.

MS. CASSELLA: Great. The defendants also have talked about the third claim, which I thought I would spend a moment on. So under the third claim, the individual plaintiffs still face homelessness because of

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RD's administration of the voucher program. As you noted -- well, in the last 107 days that Golden Eagle II has been on the market, there have been no bona fide offers to purchase the property by a non-profit or public agency.

As was noted before, on April 15, the owner is entitled to prepay the RD loan without use restriction. So at that time the individual plaintiffs will become eligible for RD vouchers. We recently learned that RD has run out of voucher funding during this fiscal year, which would prevent the individual plaintiffs from receiving those necessary vouchers.

Under all four claims, CARE's mission continues to be frustrated by the defendants' application of illegal regulations and standards. The defendant points to the Golden Eagle II revised conclusion of the CRIA to say that plaintiffs now lack standing. However, as has been noted, RD amended a CRIA conclusion after the initiation of this lawsuit and in response to this lawsuit, so mootness and not standing is the proper doctrine that this Court must use to evaluate the impact of the revised CRIA.

As has been noted, specifically the Supreme

Court precedent regarding voluntary cessation of alleged

illegal conduct places a heavy burden on the defendant to

show that there is no reasonable expectation that this wrong will be repeated, and the defendant has not met that burden.

So dismissing this case today would set a dangerous precedent. It would allow RD to continue to rely upon these illegal regulations and practices, forcing small, local nonprofits like CARE and low-income tenants nationwide to continue to spend valuable time and resources challenging each and every CRIA that relies upon the challenged regulatory standard.

THE COURT: If the regulations are unlawful,
why hasn't your statute of limitations challenge expired?

MS. CASSELLA: Sure. So the plaintiffs' claims
are not barred by statute of limitation because three of
the claims challenge RD's regulations as applied, and the
fourth claim is a facial challenge to RD's yearly
published --

THE COURT: Talk to me about the "as applied" challenge. In what way are you challenging them as being applied?

MS. CASSELLA: Sure. So the first, second, and fourth claims challenge RD's prepayment regulations, as applied. The Golden Eagle II prepayment process that began in mid-2015 relied upon the challenged regulations. RD approved the Golden Eagle II prepayment, subject to

use restrictions in November of 2015. So even though the drafted regulations were drafted several years ago, and although RD first processed prepayment requests many years before that, CARE was first harmed in 2015 when RD applied the regulations to a property within its service area.

THE COURT: And so if you're challenging those

THE COURT: And so if you're challenging those regulations, as applied in 2015, and if you had standing at the time you challenged them, and it was timely at the time you challenged them, and maybe now things have changed with CRIA II, your position is, well, all right, fine, but that's a mootness analysis. We then turn to the voluntary cessation exception, and for the reasons you've argued it is not moot.

MS. CASSELLA: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Okay. I understand.

MS. CASSELLA: Okay.

THE COURT: You can say anything further you want. I have no more questions at this time.

MS. CASSELLA: Great.

THE COURT: But I'm not shy.

All right. Thank you.

Mr. Anders, did you want to say something?

MR. ANDERS: No. Just to clarify one thing,

25 Your Honor.

THE COURT: Wait. It is funny though. I said, "Do you want to say anything?" You said, "No." Then you say, "One more thing."

MR. ANDERS: I want to correct something my colleague mentioned. RD has not fully run out of voucher funding for the current fiscal year. Under the continuing resolution that it has been operating under, it can only spend a portion of the funds that it had last year commensurate with the time and during this period the agency has run out of voucher funding.

The other thing is that it is very likely that the agency will also run out of funding by the end of the fiscal year because, at least so far as we have been able to see, Congress has only approved about \$19 million for the voucher program for this fiscal year, and last year the agency spent \$22.4 million for the voucher program, and each year the amount that the agency has spent for the vouchers has increased. So we are estimating that the agency will need probably at least somewhere between \$23 million and \$25 million for the voucher program for this fiscal year, and it would only have \$22 million.

THE COURT: Although it may be obvious, I would appreciate it if you would spell it out for the record, what would be the implication of the agency running out of funds for the voucher program.

MR. ANDERS: Yes. It means they cannot issue vouchers or renew vouchers to residents who become eligible for vouchers or renew vouchers for people who need renewal of the voucher.

I would like to point out, with respect to claim 4, we have argued that RD is improperly issuing vouchers to people who don't need them, and the Government has conceded in its answer to our first complaint that over 50 percent of its funding for the voucher program go to people who are living in developments with use restrictions, and our claim is that those people do not need vouchers unless they move from those developments. So as much as \$10 million or \$11 million is being spent by the agency for vouchers that don't need to be issued.

THE COURT: Just to make sure I understand the context of what we're talking about, now you're getting to the merits, right? That's okay.

 $$\operatorname{MR}.$$ ANDERS: I'm talking about the harm or potential harm to the residents.

THE COURT: Okay. That's fine. Thank you very much.

MR. ANDERS: Thank you.

THE COURT: Back to you, Mr. Cox, or

25 Mr. Martin, or both.

MR. COX: Thank you, Your Honor.

Plaintiffs' counsel pointed out correctly the burden that the Government bears here under the voluntary cessation exception, but the application of it is really the key here. There is a heavy burden for the Government to show that this wrong will not be repeated. It's important, I think, for the Court to realize what is the wrong that occurred here. What is that wrong? The wrong that occurred here is that the Government did an incorrect Civil Rights Impact Analysis. The Government acknowledged that, and the Government went back and did a much more robust, much more thorough Civil Rights Impacts Analysis.

THE COURT: Which I give them credit for, although I do want to acknowledge that you only told me you were going to do that after you saw my draft opinion tentatively granting preliminary injunction.

MR. COX: That is correct.

THE COURT: But I still give you credit for doing that.

MR. COX: Your Honor, the Government went back and reached the opposite conclusion in its new Civil Rights Impact Analysis. So that wrong that was the basis for the plaintiffs' injury initially in this case does no longer exist and cannot exist, and the Government's

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position is that just because the Government did one step wrong in a fairly complex program does not give the plaintiffs at any point thereafter to be able to bring claims about any other aspect of a very long and complex program.

The problem that the plaintiffs have is that their first two claims for relief are completely moot.

There is no way that the plaintiffs can show any injury from the Civil Rights Impact Analysis that was done on Golden Eagle II.

Your Honor, we have been tossing around the term "final agency action" here. Certainly there is a final agency action that will occur on this prepayment application in a few months. There is no question about that. But that doesn't mean that that is a final agency action with respect to the third and fourth claims for relief, which deal with a completely different program, a program for which the plaintiffs are not even eligible to participate in at this point in time.

In fact, Your Honor, on that fourth claim for relief, the Government never took a final agency action with respect to the Golden Eagle II property. It never issued use restrictions and then said, "Okay, we're lifting those use restriction." That would be a final agency action on the fourth claim for relief. That

didn't even occur at the commencement of this case. It was a different agency action regarding the acceptance of prepayment.

And the plaintiffs have really conceded now, by acknowledging that the tenants do not have standing to bring -- the tenants are not bringing that fourth claim for relief, Your Honor, that there is no chance that that regulation is ever going to be applied to Golden Eagle II, because a prepayment here would occur without use restrictions, if it occurs. And so for that reason, that claim for relief clearly has nothing to do with the Golden Eagle II property.

Your Honor, with respect to the funding of the vouchers issue, the plaintiffs acknowledge in footnote 7, I believe of their opposition brief, that when there had been funding shortages in the past, the agency has taken steps to ensure that tenants are able to get funding for their vouchers.

So, Your Honor, for these reasons the Government's position is that there was a flaw that the agency took at the beginning of this case that created an injury that gave the plaintiffs standing. That flaw has been remedied by a step that can no longer be changed, a settled step. Therefore, the plaintiffs do not have a cognizable injury that would give them any basis to bring

any of the claims for relief in their second amended complaint.

THE COURT: If you are waiting for a question, you're not going to get one.

Thank you, Mr. Cox.

Mr. Martin.

2.2

MR. MARTIN: A few quick points, Judge.

THE COURT: Take your time.

MR. MARTIN: As Mr. Anders brought up the issue of what he called harm, with reference to claim 3 and that RD is choosing, under their argument, to provide vouchers to residents in prepaid properties, even if there is a restrictive covenant, which they believe is a violation of ELIHPA, I would again, in light of him making out that case for harm, ask Your Honor consider looking at the annual statutory appropriations from Congress, which we believe very plainly instructs RD to make those vouchers available to all residents in properties that are prepaid after 2005. So we would implore you to consider that that alleged harm really is a phantom harm for claim 3 in that RD is doing what it was told to do.

Secondly, Judge, if you are considering for any reason -- we don't think it makes sense, and what I have been arguing and Mr. Cox has been arguing, waiting until

the prepayment really affects the viability of the claims. But if Your Honor is considering that, we would certainly want to renew our protective order motion against discovery because we believe that even if there were a claim --

THE COURT: Nobody is asking me to wait, so I'm not going to wait.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Judge.

THE COURT: Okay. Ms. Cassella or Mr. Anders.

MS. CASSELLA: Your Honor, I am going to respond.

THE COURT: I'm going to let each side continue to respond to each other until you all get exhausted or you repeat yourselves.

MS. CASSELLA: Excellent. So the wrong at issue here is not the changed CRIA conclusion, but the illegal regulations and standards that RD continues to apply. Even though the revised CRIA has a changed conclusion, the amended CRIA -- the CRIA form itself and the analysis and language of the revised CRIA still continue to rely upon disputed and challenged regulations at issue in this case, specifically the disproportionate adverse impact standards that we have been discussing.

Second, the defendant continues to ignore CARE and the frustration of its mission that these regulations

present. The two prepayment eligible properties within its service area speak to voluntary cessation and mootness doctrine and the likelihood of recurrence, which, again, the defendant still has not met here.

As the defendant just mentioned as well,

Congress has said that vouchers need to be provided to

all residents. That cannot happen if there are no

vouchers to provide to residents, so if Golden Eagle II

has prepaid for use restrictions, and there are no funds

for vouchers, the very low-income individual plaintiffs

will face very large rent increases and homelessness.

Because RD has run out of voucher funding, this puts

their house being stability at risk.

Even if voucher funding is available, the individual plaintiffs are very likely to be injured by RD's administration of the vouchers. Currently RD does not allow residents to apply for vouchers until the date of prepayment. Also, RD gives itself 90 days to provide vouchers to residents after the prepayment, but only authorizes retroactive prepayments for a 60-day period. So these gaps have been created by RD and subjects voucher-eligible residents to having to pay the full market rent, which these extremely low-income residents cannot afford. That will affect both the individual plaintiffs as well as CARE that will need to step in and

provide emergency rental assistance and resources in that situation.

Thank you.

2.2

THE COURT: Thank you.

Anything further in response, either Mr. Cox or Mr. Martin?

MR. COX: Your Honor, one point. Your Honor, I want to follow-up on one thing that Mr. Martin mentioned about discovery and go into that a little bit. I'm not repeating what he said. The agency right now has engaged in a very important process, which is monitoring this sale process, and it is very possible, but we can't say what will happen, but it is possible that offers could come in that need to be assessed, that financing might need to be looked at, and the agency has limited resources within the state office to do these things.

There is currently no motion for injunctive relief pending right now, and the Government would ask the Court that if for any reason the Court is not inclined to grant defendants' motion, that the Court would consider not moving forward in this case or allowing the agency to focus its limited resources in ensuring that it does the right thing with this process, which very could possibly result in this property staying in the program. We don't know for sure, but it is

important that the agency get this right, Your Honor.

Thank you.

THE COURT: I agree. All right. Let me comment on that, unless Mr. Anders or Ms. Cassella, you have something you want to say.

MR. ANDERS: Your Honor, the matter is not going to be resolved on April 15th, even if there is an offer. The purchaser, once the purchaser makes an offer, has 24 months to conclude the offer and the purchase. So we may not know, even if there is an offer, which we suspect may not be at this point, that we will not know the final eligibility questions as far as vouchers until 24 months from April 15th.

THE COURT: Thank you. Anything else from anyone?

All right. Following up on Mr. Cox's point, let me say this: I am not going to rule from the bench. Justiciable issues are, as we have discussed, nuanced, difficult, and interesting in my opinion. I don't know whether that's good or bad news to you, but I find them interesting.

I've spent some time on this case already. I'm going to spend a little bit more time, and I'll try to get you a final decision fairly soon. I'm not going to wait until April 15th. Since no one is asking me to

wait, I am not going to. I will get you decision. If I do find that the case is not currently justiciable, well, then that will be the end of it, and the plaintiffs can appeal. If I do find that the case is justiciable, then I would encourage the parties, consistent with what Mr. Cox just said, to confer with each other regarding an appropriate schedule. As long as both sides agree, I will give both sides the deference that would be appropriate, if you agree on an appropriate schedule and how to proceed going forward, whether it be on discovery issues or, more importantly, on an evaluation of the merits when we get to the merits.

So if I decide the case is justiciable at this time, I encourage the parties to confer with each other meaningfully and see if you can stipulate to an appropriate schedule. If you can't, that's fine. Then send me each of your separate proposals of what you would each recommend and get on the telephone and talk about that. Again, if you all agree on an appropriate proposal, you will not get any push-back from me if there is an agreement.

That said, let me also suggest this, because I really don't want to get into the merits right now. I appreciate some of the background that the defendants are providing and the responses from the plaintiffs. And if

and when we get to the merits, there will be very interesting and important issues that we will have to analyze.

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We have right now in this courtroom very sophisticated and understanding counsel and clients who understand the merits of the respective arguments, frankly, at this stage much better than I do. I'm going to leave the bench in a few minutes, taking this pending motion to dismiss under advisement. But I courage both sides to use this opportunity, now that you are all here together, and I understand that Ms. Cassella and Mr. Anders are up from San Francisco. We have clients here with their capable counsel, Mr. Cox and Mr. Martin. Maybe the six of you should spend some time, if you want -- we will give you a room here, although the U.S. Attorney's Office is in the building -- maybe the six of you should have a little bit of a discussion right now either about the merits and make sure you each understand the respective positions, I quess as you probably do, but also explore are there other things that the parties can reach agreement on to resolve this dispute.

If you can, fine. And if you can't, well, that's what courts are for. We are here to resolve disputes that are justiciable, of course. But I do urge

you to think about taking this opportunity, since all six of you are here together at this time. Enough said on that. I will take the pending motion under advisement, and I appreciate the fine briefing on both sides and the fine oral advocacy on both sides. The motion is under advisement. Thank you. (End of proceedings.)

--000--I certify, by signing below, that the foregoing is a correct transcript of the record of proceedings in the above-entitled cause. A transcript without an original signature, conformed signature, or digitally signed signature is not certified. /s/ Dennis W. Apodaca March 13, 2018 DENNIS W. APODACA, RDR, RMR, FCRR, CRR DATE Official Court Reporter

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